

## THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

An address delivered by Major General Basilio J. Valdes, P. A.

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The Philippine Archipelago was discovered by Ferdinand Magellan, who first reached the eastern Philippine Island of Samar on March 16, 1521. These islands pertaining to the Indonesian group were named by the Spanish in 1565 "Las Filipinas" (the Philippines) in honor of their King, Philip II. The Philippine Islands are Situated between 21 degrees 10 minutes and 4 degrees 40 minutes North Latitude and between 116 degrees 40 minutes and 126 degrees 34 minutes East Longitude. They lie off the coast of Southeastern Asia directly across the China Sea, 500 miles east of Hong Kong. There are altogether 7083 islands in the Archipelago, which extends 1,150 statute miles from north to south and 682 miles from east to west, Only 462 islands have an area of one square mile or more. The area of the entire Archipelago is approximately 115,600 sq. miles, or slightly less than the combined land areas of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia.

The largest Islands are Luzon, in the north, which covers a land area of 40,814 sq. miles, and Mindanao, in the south, with an area of 36,906 sq. miles. The so-called Visayan Islands; occupying a central position between these two great islands, are much smaller in area but are nevertheless important. Five of them, namely Samar, with an area of 5,124 sq. miles, Negros, with 4,904, Panay, with 4445, Palawan, with 4500 and Mindoro, with 3,794 sq. miles, The islands of Cebu, Bohol, and Masbate are smaller in size. The population of the Philippines is approximately 18,000,000.

## THE SPANISH EXPERIMENT IN GLOBAL GEOGRAPHY

The Spanish historian; Antonio Pigafetta, who accompanied Magellan on his expedition to the Philippines. was fortunate to be aboard the "Victoria", the only ship that returned out of the five that had departed from Seville. According to Pigafetta, Magellan, anxious to obtain adequate food supplies for his crew, extended his explorations. Passing the island of Bohol, he arrived at Cebu, at that time a native town of several thousand inhabitants. Pigafetta found evidence of extensive inter-island trade. He observed that Cebu merchants in 1521 were in possession of balance scales, weights and measures and had a good knowledge of the relative value of commodities.

Fired by a tremendous enthusiasm to Christianize the populations of the newly-discovered lands, Magellan was able to convert and baptize 800 Filipinos, including Humabon, their Chief or Datu. Magellan was killed by Chief Lapu Lapu in hand-to-hand combat soon afterward, while assisting the Christianized Cebuans in a fight with the natives of the nearby island of Mactan.

Still searching for the Moluccas, the expedition passed by a small number of islands of the Cagayan Sulu group, the island of Palawan, where was observed with interest the native sport of cock fighting, and landed finally at Brunei, a strong Mohammedan town on the northwest coast of the island of Borneo. Pigafetta states that Brunei consisted of two sections: one, that of the native Dyak Malay population, the other, that of the Mohammedan Malay, who were in possession of gunpowder and numerous brass cannons. The expedition then sailed to Mindanao, where native pearl fishing excited their interest. Finally the island of Tidor, one of the Molucca islands, 250 miles south of Mindanao was reached. A trade agreement and form of treaty was arranged with the Rajas, Almanzar, of the island of Tidor, and Yusef of the much larger island of Gilolo (Halmahera). At last it was possible to get down to the real purpose of the expedition, namely, trade. A trading post was established, and it was hoped that these islands could be held against the Portuguese. The Spaniards exchanged cloth for a rich cargo of cloves, sandalwood, ginger, cinnamon and gold. It was decided to send one ship, the Victoria, back to Spain under the command of Juan Sebastian Elcano by way of the Cape of Good Hope, following the established Portuguese route. The other remaining ship out of the original five was to return to the Spanish colonies in America. This latter ship was never heard from again. The Victoria sailed first to Timor, another small island of the Moluccas, and then through the Indian Ocean, around the Southern end of Africa, finally reaching the Portuguese Cape Verde Islands, where Elcano anchored, hoping to obtain supplies. The Portuguese governor became, suspicious and gave orders for the seizure of the Victoria. Elcano raised sail, arriving at San Lucas, Spain; September 6, 1522, with only 18 men left of the original company of 234. Spain welcomed the return of the expedition. Elcano was given the significant coat of arms showing the cloves, the cinnamon, and the nutmeg plants, also a globe with the inscription "Primus Circumdedit Me."

The voyage designed to appropriate for the Spanish, the trade with the East Indies already established by the Portuguese, actually led to the discovery of the Philippines to the Western World. It incidentally brought about the first circumnavigation of the globe and set in motion the cultural forces that have operated from that time on to isolate the people of the Philippines from earlier cultural affiliations and from physically related populations in Indonesia. At the same time it magnified the importance of Manila as the commercial center of the Far East and the port through which the Kingdoms of Eastern Asia exchanged their wares. Here came great fleets of junks from China laden with stores. Morga, the historian, wrote in 1609, a detailed report of this trade, enumerating their merchandise, which included all kinds of silks, brocades, furniture, pearls and gems, fruits, nuts, tame buffaloes, geese, horses, mules, all kinds of animals and even birds in cages, some of which could talk, sing and perform a thousand tricks.



Each year a fleet of 30 to 40 Chinese Junks sailed with the new moon in March. ~~the~~ voyage across the China Sea, rough with the monsoons, occupied 15 or 20 days, and the fleet returned at the end of May or the beginning of June. Between October and March there came each year Japanese ships from Nagasaki with wheat, silks, object of art and weapons, and took away from Manila the raw silk of China, gold, deer horns, woods. ~~H~~oney, wax, palm wine and wine of Castile.

From Malacca and India came fleets of the Portuguese, subjects of Spain with spices, slaves, Negros and Kafirs, and the rich products of Bengal, India, Persia and Turkey. From Borneo, too, came the smaller craft of the Malays, who from ~~in~~ their boats sold fine palm hats, slaves, sago, waterpots and glazed earthen ware. From Siam and Cambodia also, but less often, there came trading ships. Manila had become a great emporium for all the countries of the East.

The commerce between the Philippines, and Mexico and Spain, though it was of vast importance, was soon limited by action of the crown. It was a commerce which apparently admitted of infinite expansion, but the shortsighted merchants and manufacturers of the Spanish Peninsula clamored against its development, and it was subjected to the severest limitations. Four galleons were at first maintained for this trade. They were dispatched two at a time in successive years from Manila to the port of Acapulco, Mexico. These galleons were ships of 600 and 800 tons and carried troop reinforcements, mail and Mexican silver for trade with China. Later the number of galleons was reduced<sup>2</sup> to one. The solitary galleon was freighted with the pick of all the ~~rich~~ stores that came to Manila. According to the historian, Biscaino, the profits were enormous - 600 to 800%. These galleons became tempting and romantic prizes for the pirates, and many fell into their hands.

#### THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS

The Negrito is usually referred to as the earliest immigrant to the Philippines. The Tagalogs speak of the Luzon Negrito as the Aeta. Characteristic of the Negrito is his diminutive size, his frizzy hair, his black skin color, and his meager culture. He may be considered as a true pygmy, with an average height of ~~less~~<sup>2</sup> than four feet nine inches. To those<sup>2</sup> of you who have served in New Guinea, this description will bring back to your memory the natives of those areas. This racial type has diminished very much in the Philippines through death brought about by intermarriage and unsanitary living conditions. In Luzon, the Negrito can be found in the mountains of Zambales<sup>a</sup>, Pampanga and Tayabas. During the Japanese occupation, they rendered very valuable assistance to our guerrilla forces, by ambushing and attacking Japanese patrols in the mountains. The bow and arrow is his chief hunting weapon, although game is frequently trapped or snared.

The original language, as well as the entire culture complex of the Negrito, remain and probably will continue to remain unknown. In every instance where the Negrito language and customs have been expertly examined, it has been clearly established that both were borrowed from neighboring Filipino groups.

It is believed that the Indonesians came later to the Philippines presumably in superior numbers from widely separated dispersal points. The Malays came at a still later date. One usually refers to the Malay as the most representative of the Indonesian peoples. He possesses much more initiative than the earlier Indonesian immigrant peoples. He is a great trader and possesses a certain political sense which enabled him to form large political organizations that in a short time, penetrated but did not entirely control all of Indonesia.

### SPANISH COLONIZATION

The Spanish did not colonize the Philippines until 1565, when a soldier by the name of Legaspi and a priest whose name was Urdaneta were sent to establish the colony and convert the people to Catholicism. Spain brought to the Philippines not only the Christian religion, but also the Spanish language and the culture of western civilization. Beautiful churches were built in all parts of the Islands, many of which still stand erect, silent witnesses of Spain's great work as a colonizer. The University of Santo Tomas, the oldest under the American Flag, was founded in 1611. Many thousands of students have gone through its portals of learning. Many of the great men of the Philippines, who made history during the Spanish domination as well as during the American regime, were graduates of Santo Tomas.

Unfortunately, however, the later years of the Spanish rule were characterized by despotism and a complete disregard of the rights and sentiments of the people. Several young Filipinos, studying then in Spain, France and Germany, in a common effort, published a newspaper in Spain, and in a manner worthy of praise and admiration, bravely aired their grievances in well-written articles. Among the most outspoken was Dr. Jose Rizal, a young physician and graduate of the University of Madrid. He published two remarkable books "Noli Me Tangere" and "The Reign of Greed", fearlessly exposing Spain's cruel and rotten administration of the Islands.

Against the advice of Dr. Rizal, who counseled a passive resistance, the people revolted in 1896. The revolt was suppressed and Rizal, who was accused of being the spirit behind the move, was treacherously brought back from Spain where he was sent with a guaranty of immunity and executed by a firing squad in Luneta on December 30, 1896. A marble slab marks the place of execution. The spirit of the people, however, had not been subdued and when the United States declared war on Spain in 1896, the Filipinos revolted again and assisted the American forces as well as they could.



### THE AMERICAN REGIME

When the treaty of Paris was signed, the Filipinos thought that the United States would turn over the country to them, as she had done with Cuba. When this did not take place, the Filipinos felt that they had gotten rid of a cruel master, just to fall prey to another. After two years of armed resistance, the Filipinos realized that the United States had not come to the Philippines in a spirit of conquest, and to milk the country of its riches, but to assist the people to get back on their feet and train them in the science of self-government. You brought into the country American teachers, opened public schools even in the most remote areas, and made education and learning compulsory to every child and youth in the land. Today, you find hundreds and hundreds of well-trained Filipino engineers, physicians, lawyers, nurses and teachers, all products of America's program of education in the Islands. In addition, you brought engineers and road builders, and doctors and nurses. You introduced the use of serums and compulsory mass vaccination. The pock-marked faces of the older adult population are not observable among the young. We can proudly boast that there has not been a single case of smallpox in the Philippines since 1913. The early removal of all lepers from various parts of the islands to a leper colony established in the island of Culion, eliminated the danger of the spread of leprosy. Potable water supply was established in Manila and other large centers of population. Even isolated barrios are provided with good drinking water from Artesian wells. Thus the spread of disease caused by the drinking of contaminated water has to a large extent ceased. Manila has become one of the cleanest cities in the Far East.

### JAPANESE DREAM OF AGGRESSION AND EXPANSION

When the Japanese attacked the Philippines on December 8, 1941, they saw at last the realization of their dream of conquest, which they had been nursing for over three centuries. The Spanish writer, Antonio de Morga relates an incident which appears in history as an ominous forerunner of the 1941 aggression. During the rule of the Ming Dynasty in China (1368 - 1643), commercial relations between China and Japan were rippled by Japanese corsairs, which pillaged the coasts of Southern China. The powerful Shogun Hideyoshi, a very ambitious and aggressive Japanese ruler observed a hostile attitude toward China. In 1592, he cast his eyes on the Philippines, and he dispatched a message to the Spanish governor, Gomez Perez Dasmariñas, demanding the recognition of his supremacy otherwise he would enforce it by an invasion and devastation of the Islands. The frightened governor, not prepared for such an attack nor willing to lose the profitable trade relations with Japan, sent an embassy under the leadership of a Dominican friar to the Taiko to whom he offered a treaty of amity. Hideyoshi promised to desist from military action on payment of a yearly tribute. In 1593, the conditions of the treaty were stipulated,

according to which the Japanese promised to dispatch annually to Manila ships freighted with provisions, to stop piracy and to grant passports to Spanish captains for the safety of their ships

### THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT

When after the signature of the treaty of Paris, President William McKinley made the statement, "The Philippines for the Filipinos", the whole world laughed at America's idea of colonization. But when Japan attacked the United States as well as the English and Dutch possessions in the Pacific, the old colonizing powers of the Western World did not laugh anymore. Much to their surprise, they realized that the American experiment had not failed. There they saw how the Filipinos rose in arms and fought Japan side by side with their American friends and benefactors. The forty-five years of close association had created a mutual loyalty and friendship that stood the acid test in the battlefields of Bataan and in the tunnels of Corregidor. Neither the British nor the Dutch could boast of the same loyalty and friendship from their subject peoples in their Far East possessions. You may be assured that the Filipinos will always be ready to fight side by side with the United States in the defense of her territories and her democratic principles of government.

### THE FILIPINO HOME

Let me finish this talk by giving you a concise picture of the Filipino home. The Filipino is a lover of home and devoted to his family. He will go out of his way, and undergo and hardship or privation to help not only a member of his immediate family, but a distant relative as well. He has a profound respect and admiration for womanhood, and considers his mother, his wife or his sisters as the Queens of the Home. He is, by nature, very sensitive to the Anglo-Saxon type of jokes, and will deeply resent any disrespectful remark made on the female members of his household. You will find the Filipino homes always open to Americans. Try to win their friendship and avoid committing any mistake that may destroy their trust in you. To you enlisted men, I advise that you endeavor to visit the Filipinos in their homes. Do not Judge the Filipino people by the type of men and women that lurk around barracks and Army camps.